The Strange Case of Mr. Challoner

We have with us today a new detective of the fiction world. He is a marvel, and he has an entirely new way of solving a mystery. Read this first of his adventures.

By Herbert Jenkins.

"PLEASE, sir, Miss Norman's fainted." William Johnson, known to his colleagues as the innocent, stood at Malcolm Sage's door, with widened eyes and a general air that bespoke helplessness.

Without a word Malcolm Sage rose from his table, as if accustomed all his life to the fainting of secretaries. Entering her room, he found Gladys Norman lying in a heap beside her typewriter. Picking her up, he carried her into his own room, placed her in an armchair, fetched some brandy from a small cupboard, and, still watched by the wide-eyed William Johnson, proceeded to force a little between her teeth.

Presently her lids flickered and a moment later she opened her eyes. For a second there was in them a look of uncertainly, then suddenly they opened to their fullest extent and became fixed upon the door beyond. Malcolm Sage glanced over his shoulder and saw framed in the doorway Sir James Walton.

"Sit down, chief," he said, quietly, his gaze returning to the girl sitting limply in the large leather-covered armchair. "I shall be free in a moment."

As Miss Norman made an effort to rise, he placed a detaining hand upon her arm.

"Send Mr. Thompson."

With a motion of his hand Malcolm Sage indicated to William Johnson that the dramatic possibilities of the situation were exhausted, at least as far as he was concerned.

When Thompson entered Malcolm Sage instructed him to move the leather-covered chair into Miss Norman's room and, when she was rested, to take her home in the car.

Thompson's face beamed. His devotion to Gladys Norman was notorious.

The girl rose and raised to Malcolm Sage a pair of dark eyes from which tears were not far distant.

"I'm so ashamed, Mr. Sage," she began, her lower lip trembling ominously. "I've never done such a thing before."

"I've been working you too hard," he said, as he held back the door. "You must go home and rest."

She shook her head and passed out, while Malcolm Sage returned to his seat at the table.

"Working till 2 o'clock this morning," he remarked as he resumed his seat. "She won't have assistance. Strange creatures, women," he added, musingly, "but beautifully loyal."

Sir James had dropped into a chair on the opposite side of Malcolm Sage's table. Having selected a cigar from the box his late chief of staff pushed across to him, he cut off the end and proceeded to light it.

"Good cigars these," he remarked, as he critically examined the lighted end.

"They're your own brand, chief," was the reply. Malcolm Sage always used the old name of "chief" when addressing Sir James Walton. It seemed to constitute a link with the old war days when they had worked together with a harmony that had bewildered those heads of departments who had regarded Malcolm Sage as something between a punishment and a misfortune.

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FOR some seconds they were silent. It was like old times to be seated one on each side of a table, and both seemed to realize the fact.

"I've just motored up from Hurstchurch," began Sir James at length, having assured himself that his cigar was drawing as a good cigar should draw.

"Been staying with an old friend of mine, Geoffrey Challoner."

Malcolm Sage nodded.

"He was shot last night. That's why I'm here." He paused, but Malcolm Sage made no comment. His whole attention was absorbed in an ivory paper knife, which he was endeavoring to balance upon the handle of the silver inkstand.

"At half-past 7 this morning," continued Sir James. "Peters, the butler, knocked at Challoner's door with his shaving water. As there was no reply he entered and found, not only that Challoner was not there, but that the bed had not been slept in overnight."

Malcolm lifted his hands from the paper knife. It balanced.

"He thought Challoner had fallen asleep in the library," continued Sir James, "which he sometimes did; he is rather a night owl. Peters then went downstairs, but found the library door locked on the inside. As there was no response to his knocking, he went round to the lawn at the back of the house. The curtains were drawn, however, and he could see nothing."

Malcolm Sage nodded, and Sir James resumed his story.

"Peters then went upstairs to young Dane's room; Dane is Challoner's nephew, who lives with him. While he dressed he sent Peters to tell me.

"A few minutes later we all went down to the library and tried to attract Challoner's attention; but without result. I then suggested forcing an entry from the garden, which was done by breaking the glass of one of the French windows.

"We found Challoner seated at his table dead, shot throught the head. He had an automatic pistol in his hand." Sir James paused; his voice had become husky with emotion. Presently he resumed:

"We telephoned for the police and a doctor, and I spent the time until they came in a thorough examination of the room. The French windows had been securely bolted top and bottom from within by means of a central handle. All the panes of glass were intact, with the exception of that we had broken. The door had been locked on the inside, and the key was in position. It was unlocked by Peters when he went into the hall to telephone. It has a strong mortice-lock and the key did not protrude through to the other side, so that there was no chance of manipulating the lock from without.

"The doctor was the first to arrive. At my urgent request he refrained from touching the body. He said death had taken place from seven to ten hours previously as the result of the bullet wound in the temple. He had scarcely finished his examination when an inspector of police, who had motored over from Lewes, joined us.

"It took him very few minutes to decide that poor Challoner had shot himself. In this he was confirmed by the doctor. Still I insisted that the body should not be removed."

"Why did you do that, chief?" enquired Malcolm Sage.

"Because I was not satisfied," was the reply. "There was absolutely no motive for suicide. Challoner was in good health and, if I know anything about men, determined to live as long as the gods give."

Again Malcolm Sage nodded his head meditatively.

"The jumping to hasty conclusions," he remarked, "has saved many a man his neck. Whom did you leave in charge?" he queried.

"The inspector. I locked the door; here is the key," he said, producing it from his jacket pocket. "I told him to allow no one into the room."

"Why were you there?" Malcolm Sage suddenly looked up, flashing that keen, steely look through his gold-rimmed spectacles that many men had found so disconcerting. "Ordinary visit?" he queried.

"No." Sir James paused, apparently deliberating something in his own mind. He was well acquainted with Malcolm Sage's habit of asking apparently irrelevant questions.

"There's been a little difficulty between Challoner and his nephew," he said slowly. "Some days back the boy announced his determination of marrying a girl he had met in London, a typist or secretary. Challoner was greatly upset, and threatened to cut him out of his will if he persisted. There was a scene, several scenes, in fact, and eventually I was sent for as Challoner's oldest friend."

"You advised?" When keenly interested, Malcolm Sage's questions were like pistol-shots.

"That Challoner should wait and see the girl."

"Did he?"

Again Sir James hesitated, only for a fraction of a second, however.

"Yes; but unfortunately with the object of endeavoring to buy her off. Yesterday afternoon Dane brought her over. Challoner saw her alone. She didn't stay more than a quarter of an hour. Then she and Dane left the house together, he to see her to the station. An hour later he returned. I was in the hall at the time. He was in a very excited state. He pushed past me, burst into the library, banging the door behind him.

"That evening at dinner Challoner told me there had been a very unpleasant scene. He had warned the boy that unless he apologized today he would telephone to London for his lawyer, and make a fresh will entirely disinheriting him. Soon after the interview Dane went out of the house, and apparently did not return until late—as a matter of fact, after I had gone to bed. I was feeling tired and said good night' to Challoner about half-past 10 in the library.

"It's a pity you let the butler unlock the door," he remarked regretfully.

Sir James looked across at his late chief of staff keenly. He detected something of reproach in his tone.

"Did you happen to notice if the electric light was on when you entered the library?"

"No," said Sir James, after a slight pause; "it was not."

Malcolm Sage reached across to the private telephone and gave the "three on the buzzer" that always galvanized Miss Gladys Norman into instant vitality.

"Miss Norman," said Sage as she entered, "can you lend me the small mirror I have seen you use occasionally?"

"Yes, Mr. Sage," and she disappeare, returning a moment later with the mirror from her handbag. She was accustomed to Malcolm Sage's strange requests.

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A quarter of an hour later the two men entered Sir James' car, whilst Thompson and Dawkins, the official photographer to the bureau, followed in that driven by Tims. Malcolm Sage would cheerfully have sacrificed anybody and anything to serve his late chief.

As the car drew up, the hall-door of The Cedars was thrown open by the butler, a fair-haired, clean-shaven man of about forty-five, with grave, impassive face, and eyes that gave the impression of allowing little to escape them.

As he descended the flight of stone steps to open the door of the car a young man appeared behind him. A moment later Sir James was introducing him to Malcolm Sage as "Mr. Richard Dane."

Dark, with smoothly brushed hair, and a toothbrush mustache, he might easily have been passed over in a crowd without a second glance. He was obviously and acutely nervous. His fingers moved jerkily, and there were twitchings at the corner of his mouth that he seemed unable to control. It was not a good-tempered mouth.

Peters conducted Sir James and Malcolm Sage to the dining room, where luncheon was laid.

"Shall I serve luncheon, Sir James?" he inquired, ignoring Dane, who was clearly unequal to the strain of the duties of host.

Sir James looked across at Malcolm Sage, who shook his head.

"I'll see the library first," he said. "Sir James will show me. Fetch Dawkins," he said to Thompson, and he followed Sir James through the house out on to the lawn.

As they entered the library by the French windows a tall, sandy man rose from the armchair in which he was seated. He was Inspector Gorton of the Sussex county constabulary. Malcolm Sage nodded a little absently. His eyes were keenly taking in every detail of the figure sprawling across the writing table. The head rested on the left cheek, and there was an ugly wound in the right temple, from which blood had dripped and congealed upon the table. In the right hand was clutched a small automatic pistol. The arm was slightly curved, the weapon pointing to the left.

Malcolm Sage next proceeded to regard the body from every angle, even going down on his knees to see the position of the legs beneath the table. He then walked round the room and examined everything with minute attention, particularly the key in the door, which Sir James had replaced in its position on the inside. The keyhole on both sides of the door came in for careful scrutiny.

Finally he returned to the table, where, dropping on one knee on the left-hand side of the body, he drew a penknife from his pocket, and proceeded with great care and deliberation to slit up the outer seam of the trousers so that the pocket lay exposed.

This in turn he cut open, taking care not to disturb the bunch of keys which, attached to a chain, lay on the thigh, a little to the left.

Having assured himself that the keys would not slide off, Malcolm Sage rose and turned to Dawkins:

"I want a plate from the right, the left, the front, and from behind and above. Also an exposure showing the position of the legs, and another of the keys."

Dawkins inclined his head. He was a gray, baldheaded little man, who had only one thought in life, his profession.

"When Dawkins has finished," said Malcolm Sage, turning to the inspector, who had been watching the proceedings with ill-disguised impatience, "you can remove the body; but leave the pistol. Give Mr. Challoner's keys to Sir James. And now I think we might lunch," he said, turning to Sir James.

As Malcolm Sage left the room the inspector shrugged his shoulders. The whole thing was so obvious that, but for the presence of Sir James Walton, he would have refused to delay the removal of the body. The doctor had pronounced the wound self-inflicted, and even if he had not done so, the circumstantial evidence was conclusive.

Luncheon was eaten in silence, a constrained and uncomfortable meal. Malcolm Sage ate as he always ate it, entire indifference as to what was on the plate, from which he never lifted.

Sir James made several ineffectual efforts to draw Dane into conversation; but at each remark the young man started violently, as if suddenly recalled to his surroundings. Finally Sir James desisted, and the meal concluded in abysmal silence.

Malcolm Sage then announced that he would examine the various members of the household, and Dane and Peters left the room.

One by one the servants entered, were interrogated, and departed. Even the gardener and his wife, who lived at the lodge, by the main gate, were cross-questioned.

Mrs. Trennett, the housekeeper, was incoherent in her voluble anxiety to give information. The maids were almost too frightened to speak, and from none was anything tangible extracted.

No one had any reason for being near the library late at night.

When Peters' turn came he told his story with a clearness and economy of words that caused Malcolm Sage mentally to register him as a good witness. He was a superior kind of man, who had been in his present position only some six months; but during that time he had given every satisfaction, so much so that Mr. Challoner had remarked to Sir James that he believed he had found a treasure.

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ACCORDING to Peters' account, at a quarter-past eleven on the previous evening he had gone to the library, as was his custom, to see if there were anything else that Mr. Challoner required before he locked up for the night. On being told there was nothing, he had accordingly seen to the fastenings of doors and windows and gone to bed.

"What was Mr. Challoner doing when you entered the room?" inquired Malcolm Sage, intent upon a design he was drawing upon the surface of the salt:

"He was sitting at the table where I found him this morning."

"What was he actually doing?"

"I think he was checking his bankbook, sir."

"Did you notice anything strange about his manner?"

"No, sir."

"When you found that his bed had not been slept in were you surprised?"

"Not greatly, sir," was the response. "Once before a similar thing happened, and I heard from the other servants that on several occasions Mr. Challoner had spent the night in the library, having fallen asleep there."

"When you told Mr. Dane that his uncle had not slept in his room and that the library door was locked on the inside, what did he say?"

"He said, 'Good Lord! Peters, something must have happened.'"

"Mr. Dane knew that on previous occasions his uncle had spent the night in his study?" inquired Malcolm Sage.

"I think so, sir," was the response.

"The pistol was one he used at target practice?"

"Yes, sir."

"Where did he keep it?"

"In the third right-hand drawer of his table, sir."

"Do you know of any reason why Mr. Challoner should commit suicide?" Malcolm Sage inquired of Peters.

"None whatever, sir; he always seemed very happy."

"We had no domestic worries?"

Peters hesitated for a moment.

"He never mentioned any to me, sir."

"You have in mind certain events that occurred during the past few days, I take it?" said Malcolm Sage.

"That was in my mind, sir," was the response.

"You know of no other way by which any one could have got into the library and then out again, other than through the door or the window?"

"There is no other way, sir."

"Who has access to the library in the ordinary way? Tell me the names of everybody who is likely to go in at any time."

"Outside Mr. Challoner and Mr. Dane, there is myself, Mrs. Trennett, the housekeeper, and Meston, the housemaid."

"No one else?"

"No one, sir, except, of course, the guests who might be staying in the house."

"I shall want the finger-prints of all those you have named, including yours, Sir James." Malcolm Sage looked across at Sir James Walton. "I can then identify those of any stranger that I may find." Sir James nodded.

"It would be quite easy for Mr. Challoner to let any one in through the French windows?" inquired Malcolm Sage, turning once more to Peters.

"Quite, sir."

"What time did Mr. Dane return last evening?"

"I think about a quarter to 11, sir. He went straight to his room."

"That will be all now. Tell Mr. Dane should like to see him."

Peters noiselessly withdrew.

A few minutes later Dane entered the room. Malcolm Sage gave him a keen, appraising look, then dropped his eyes. Dane was still acutely nervous.

"Will you tell me what took place yesterday between you and your uncle?" said Malcolm Sage.

"We had a row," he began, then paused; "a terrible row."

"So I understand," said Malcolm Sage. "I know what it was about. Just tell me actually what took place. In as few words as possible, please."

"A week ago I told my uncle of my engagement, and he was very angry when he knew that my fiancee was—was——"

"A secretary," suggested Malcolm Sage, without looking up.

"Yes. He ordered me to break off the engagement at once, no matter what it might cost. I refused. Four days ago Sir James came and, I think, talked things over with my uncle, who said he would see Enid, that is, my fiancee. She came yesterday afternoon. My uncle insisted on seeing her alone. She stayed only a few minutes."

"You walked back to the station with her," remarked Malcolm Sage, "and she told you what had taken place. Your uncle had offered to buy her off. You were furious. You said many wild and extravagant things. Then you came back and went immediately into the library. What took place there?"

"I don't remember what I said. I think for the time I was insane. He had actually offered her money, notes. He had drawn them out of the bank on purpose." Again he stopped, as if the memory of the insult were too much for him.

"And you said?" suggested Malcolm Sage.

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"I don't remember what I said; but my uncle told me that, unless I wrote to Enid today giving her up and apologized to him, he would telephone for his lawyer and make a fresh will, cutting me out of it entirely. I was to have until the next morning to decide—that is, today."

"And what would your decision have been?" he asked.

"I told him that if he gave me ten years it would be the same."

"That you would not do as he wished?"

"Certainly not."

"Until this episode you were on good terms with each other?" Malcolm Sage had got a dessert spoon and fork to balance on the blade of a knife.

"Yes."

"You know of no reason why your uncle should take his life?"

"None whatever."

"Do you believe he shot himself?" Malcolm Sage seemed absorbed in the rise and fall of the balancing silver.

"But for the locked door I should have said 'no.'"

"By the way, where did your uncle bank?" enquired Malcolm Sage casually.

"At the Southern Counties and Brown's Bank, Lewes," was the reply.

"Thank you. That will do, I think, for the present. You had better run 'round to your doctor and get him to give you something to steady your nerves," said Malcolm Sage, with eyes that had lost their professional glint. "They are all on edge."

Malcolm Sage rose and, walking over to the door, removed the key, examining the wards intently, then replaced it and, opening the door, walked across to the library.

He found that Dawkins had completed his work, and the body of Mr. Challoner had been removed.

Seating himself at the table, he took the automatic pistol in his hand and deliberately removed the cartridges. Then placing the muzzle against his right temple he turned his eyes momentarily on Dawkins, who, having anticipated his wishes, had already adjusted the camera. He removed the cap, replaced it, and then quickly reversed the plate.

Pulling the trigger, Malcolm Sage allowed his head to fall forward, his right hand which held the pistol, dropping on the table before him. Dawkins took another photograph.

"Now," said Malcolm Sage to Sir James. "You shoot me through the right temple, approaching from behind. Grip my head as if you expected me to resist."

Sir James did as he was requested, Dawkins making another exposure.

Malcolm Sage motioned Thompson to draw the curtains. Then dropping on to his knees by the library door, he took the small mirror he had borrowed from Miss Norman and, placing it partly beneath the door, carefully examined the reflection by the aid of an electric torch.

When he rose it was with the air of a man who had satisfied himself upon some important point. He then turned to Sir James.

"You might get those finger prints," he said casually. "Get every one together in the dining room. See that no one leaves it for at least a quarter of an hour. Thompson will go with you."

Whilst Sir James Walton and Thompson were occupied with a roomful of domestics, talking in whispers as if in the presence of death, Malcolm Sage was engaged in a careful examination of the bottoms of all the doors in the house by means of a mirror placed upward beneath each. He also removed the keys and gave a swift look at the wards of each.

He moved quickly; yet without haste, as if his brain had entire control of the situation.

One door in particular appeared to interest him, so much so that he entered the room and, proceeded to examine it with great thoroughness, paying the utmost care to replace everything as he found it.

From the middle drawer of the chest of drawers he extracted from under a pile of clothes a thin steel object, some five or six inches in length, wound round with a fine, strong twine. This he slipped into his pocket and, going down into the hall, rang up the manager of the Lewes branch of the Southern Counties and Brown's Bank.

Passing into the library, he searched the drawers of the table at which Mr. Challoner had been found. In one of them he discovered the pass-book. Seating himself at the table, he proceeded to examine it carefully. Turning to the pockets at either end, where cancelled checks are usualy placed, he found both were empty.

When a few minutes later Sir James and Thompson entered with the finger-prints, Malcolm Sage was seated at the table smoking. Taking the sheets of paper from Thompson, he went through them rapidly, then drawing a sheet of note-paper from the rack before him he scribbled a hasty note, inclosed with one of the finger prints in an envelope, which he sealed, addressed, and handed to Thompson with instructions to see that it was delivered without delay. He also told him to send Peters and Dane to the library.

"Have you the key of the safe, Mr. Dane?" inquired Malcolm Sage as the young man entered, followed by Peters. Dane shook his head and looked at Peters.

"Mr. Challoner always wore it on his key-chain, sir," said the butler.

"Have you any objection to the safe being opened?" inquired Malcolm Sage to Dane.

"None whatever."

"Then perhaps you will open it?" said Malcolm Sage, turning to Sir James.

In the safe were found several bundles of letters and share certificates, and an old cashbox containing some loose stamps, but nothing else.

Malcolm Sage dismissed Peters and Dane, saying that he would be returning to town after dinner. In the meantime he and Sir James strolled about the grounds, whilst Dawkins was busily occupied in a darkened bathroom.

It was nearly 9 o'clock when the distant moan of a hooter announced to Malcolm Sage's alert ears the return of Tims. He rose from the table and walked slowly to the door, where for some seconds he stood with his hand upon the knob.

As the car drew up he slipped into the hall, just as Peters opened the door.

A moment later the butler started back, his right hand seemed to fly to his left breast pocket. At the same moment Malcolm Sage sprang forward. There was a flash, a report, and two bodies fell at the feet of Inspector Wensdale of Scotland Yard, and another man standing beside.

In a second, however, they had thrown themselves upon the struggling heap, and when Malcolm Sage rose to his feet it was to look down upon Peters pinned to the floor by the inspector, with the strange man sitting on his legs.

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"THERE is no witness so sure as the camera," remarked Malcolm Sage, as he gazed from one to the other of two photographs before him, one representing him holding an automatic pistol to his own head, and the other in which Sir James was posing as a murderer.

Malcolm Sage never failed to emphasize the importance of photography in the detection of crime. He contended that a photographic print established for all time what the eye could only dimly register for the moment, with the consequent danger of forgetfulness.

He picked up a third photograph and laid it beside the others. It was a print of Mr. Challoner's head, showing, marked in ink, the course of the bullet toward the left of the frontal bone.

"A man shooting himself," began Malcolm Sage, "places the pistol in a position so that the muzzle is directed towards the back of the head. On the other hand, any one approaching his victim from behind would have a tendency to direct the muzzle toward the front of the head. That is why I got Dawkins to take a photograph of me holding the pistol to my head and of you holding it from behind. These photographs will constitute the principal evidence at the trial."

Sir James nodded. He was too interested to interrupt.

"On this enlargement of the wound," continued Malcolm Sage, "you will see an abrasion on the side nearer the ear, as if the head had suddenly been jerked backwards between the time of the muzzle being placed against the temple and the actual firing of the shot."

Thompson leaned across to examine the photograph.

"If the eyes of some one sitting at a table are suddenly and unexpectedly covered from behind, the natural instinct is to jerk backward so that the head may be turned to see who it is. That is exactly what occurred with Challoner. He jerked backwards, and the barrel of the pistol grazed the skin and was deflected still more toward the frontal bone."

Sir James and Thompson exchanged glances. Dawkins stood by, a look of happiness in his eyes. His beloved camera was justifying itself once more. Inspector Wensdale breached heavily.

"Apart from all this, the position of the head on the table and the way in which the hand was holding the pistol, not to speak of the curve of the arm, were unnatural. You get some idea of this from the photograph that Dawkins took of me, although I could only simulate death by relaxing the muscles. Again, the head would hardly be likely to twist on to its side."

"The next step," continued Malcolm Sage, "was how could any one get into the room and approach Challoner without being heard or 'sensed'?"

"He must have been very much absorbed in what he was doing," suggested Sir James.

Malcolm Sage shook his head and for a few seconds gazed at the photographs before him.

"You will remember there was nothing on the table in front of him. It is very unlikely that a man sitting at a table would not be conscious of some one approaching him from behind, no matter how quietly he stepped, unless that man's presence in the room were quite a natural thing. That gave me the clue to Peters. He is the only person who could be in the library without Challoner taking any notice of him. Consequently it was easy for him to approach his master and shoot him."

"But the locked door, sir," said Thompson.

"That is a very simple matter. An ordinary lead pencil, with a piece of string tied to one end, put through the ring of the key to act as a lever, the cord being passed beneath the door, will lock any door in existence. The pencil can then be drawn under the door."

"That is why you examined the under edge of the door?" suggested Sir James.

Malcolm Sage nodded. "The marks of the cord were clearly defined and reflected in the mirror."

"Mr. Sage, you're a wonder," burst out the inspector.

"I then," proceeded Malcolm Sage, "examined all the other doors in the house, and I found that of one room, which I after discovered to be Peters', was heavily scored at the bottom. He had evidently practised fairly extensively before putting the plan into operation. He had also done the same thing with the library door, as there were marks of more than one operation. Furthermore, he was wiser than to take the risk of so clumsy a tool as a lead-pencil. He used this."

Malcolm Sage drew from his pocket the roll of twine with the thin steel instrument down the center. It was a canvas-needle, to the eye of which the cord was attached.

"This was absolutely safe," he remarked. "Another thing I discovered was that one lock, and only one lock in the house, had recently been oiled—that of the library door."

Sir James nodded his head several times. There was something of self-reproach in the motion.

"Now," continued Malcolm Sage, "we come back to why a man should be sitting at a table absorbed in gazing at nothing, and at a time when most of the household are either in bed or preparing for bed."

"Peters said that he was checking his pass-book," suggested Sir James.

"That is undoubtedly what he was doing," continued Malcolm Sage, "and Peters removed the pass-book, put it in a drawer, first destroying the cancelled checks. He made a blunder in not replacing the pass-book with something else. That was the last link in the chain," he added.

"I don't quite see—" began Sir James.

"What actually happened was that Mr. Challoner went to his bank to draw five hundred pounds with which he hoped to bribe his nephew's fiancee. He trusted to the temptation of the actual money rather than a check. When he was at the bank the manager once more asked him to return his pass-book, which had not been balanced for several months. He was very dilatory in such matters."

"That is true," said Dane, speaking for the first time.

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"THAT evening he proceeded to compare it with his check-book. I suspect that Peters had been forging checks and he saw here what would lead to discovery. Furthermore, there was a considerable sum of money in the safe, and the quarrel between uncle and nephew to divert suspicion. This, however, was mere conjecture—that trouser-pocket photo, Dawkins," said Malcolm Sage, turning to the photographer, who handed it across to him.

"Now notice the position of those keys. They are put in head foremost and do not reach the bottom of the pocket. They had obviously been taken away and replaced in the pocket as Challoner sat there. Had he gone to the safe himself and walked back to his chair, the position of the keys would have been quite different."

Instinctively each man felt in his trousers pocket, and found in his own bunch of keys a verification of the statement.

"The whole scheme was too calculated and deliberate for an amateur," said Malcolm Sage, knocking the ashes out of his pipe on to a brass ashtray. "That is what prompted me to get the finger prints of Peters, so that I might send them to Scotland Yard to see if anything was known of him there. The result you have seen."

"We've been on the look out for him for more than a year," said Inspector Wensdale. "The New York police are rather interested in him about a forgery stunt that took place there some time ago."

"Then, again, there was the electric light," proceeded Malcolm Sage. "A man about to blow out his brains would certainly not walk across the room, switch off the light and then find his way back to the table.

"On the other hand, a murderer, who has to stand at a door for at least some seconds, would not risk leaving on the light, which would attract the attention of any one who might by chance be in the hall, or on the stairs."

"Well, I'm glad I didn't get you down on a fool's errand, Sage," said Sir James, rising. "Did you suspect Peters was armed?"

"I saw the pistol under his left armpit," said Malcolm Sage. "It's well known with American gunmen as a most convenient place for quick drawing."

"If it hadn't been for you, Mr. Sage, he'd have got me," said Inspector Wensdale.

"There'll be a heavy carful for Tims," remarked Malcolm Sage, as he walked toward the door.

MALCOM SAGE BALANCED A DESSERTSPOON AND FORK ON THE BLADE OF HIS KNIFE.

SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION TO RECEIVE FAMOUS WARD COLLECTION FROM PARIS

BY STERLING HEILIG.

PARIS, July 10, 1921.

STERLING HEILIG, The Sunday Star's Special Correspondent in France, Reports Wonderful Sculptures and Ethnological Data En Route to Washington—Collected by Man Who Was Last Surviving Member of the Stanley Expedition Into Darkest Africa—The Mass of Curios to Have a Permanent Home.

ON the way to America, henceforth to hold a permanent place in the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, is a collection which is called unique in the world. It is the famous collection of the late Herbert Ward, who was the last surviving member of the Stanley expedition into darkest Africa. He was a Britisher, well known as an explorer, sculptor, writer and, above all, perhaps, as the man who stepped out of twentieth century civilization back into the stone age, when he spent years of his life among the remote Congo tribes.

Ward found the soul of primitive Africa and, in doing so, is said to have found the beginnings of all mankind—a thing reflected in these strange implements, weapons and other relics which he brought out with him, and no less in the powerful brooding types of his bronze statues.

Shortly before the war Herbert Ward revealed the ultimate destination of this unique mass of material, which is priceless, because its like can never be collected again. In honor of his American wife and in gratitude for American kindnesses to himself, he dedicated the entire collection to the Smithsonian, founded in Washington by another Englishman a hundred years ago "for the increase of knowledge among men."

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I MET Herbert Ward in the spring of 1913. He was an outstanding figure in Paris at that moment, and one of the happiest and most fortunate men, you might say, in the cultured French capital. He wore the red ribbon of the Legion of Honor. He was a member of the Epatant, the envied club, with its terrace on the Avenue Gabriel, between the Hotel Crillon and what was to be, later, the American Red Cross' gardened town house. He was Herbert, drawn to life in Hopkinson Smith's book, "The Armchair at the Inn." In Paris society his wife was the American hostess who gathered around her representative English, French and her own people.

Mrs. Ward, who has herself given the funds and other support necessary to the carrying out of her husband's bequest, was a Miss Sanford of New York, daughter of C. H. Sanford, esq., a sort of Pierpont Morgan of the Argentine—one of the principal men in the development of that country—and living in Eaton square, London, at the time of the marriage.

There remain four children — two married daughters, Mrs. Colville Barclay, whose husband just before the war was first secretary of the British embassy at St. Petersburg, and Mrs. Eric Phipps, wife of the British charge d'affaires at Belgrade at the same moment, and two surviving sons. The eldest is Herbert Ward, who was a lieutenant in the royal air force, captured by the Germans and who made a sensational escape through Switzerland. The youngest, Rodman, is a student at Oxford. A third son was killed in the war.

It was of this son, who was to be killed in the war, that his father was so proud in 1913. At Oxford he had just won in the elimination trials as welterweight to represent his university against Cambridge. Previously he had won the public schools boxing competition, held annually by the military authorities at Aldershot. Young Ward had represented Eton.

"He is good at the game," the father told happily. "In the first three contests he knocked out each adversary in the first round and won the final. The second man was insensible for quite a time. When he came to, my boy, who was bending over him, said: 'I hope that you will soon be all right.' And the other looked up smiling. 'What a wallop!' he said. 'I hope that you'll win.' Now, that's the sporting spirit!" beamed the father, who had done some walloping himself.

In those days the Wards spent their summers at Rollebois, outside Paris, in the beautiful home which Herbert had built on the heights overlooking the Seine. At the top of the private drive you read his greeting:

"Leave all your troubles at the bottom of the hill."

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IN Paris, seeking models for the posing of his ideal bronzes, he smoothed out the troubles of the humblest folks who hit the capital. He found them in the spring fairs, which brought Pezon's menagerie and to get it out of reach of the approaching Germans in 1914.

It was a museum then, as now—a collection such as no white man ever before possessed, the finest collection in the world in quality, and probably in number as well. He received me in it a number of times, and on some occasions I made notes, with his permission and aid. In fact, at one time I helped with the catalogue, after having procured him a peculiarly competent stenographer, etc.

"All this is past and gone," he would wave his hand. "Here is the soul of primitive Africa. It is no more!

"See these broad knives," he would explain. "When the first men, untaught and groping after art, tried to give decorative form to usual objects, they made their knife like a leaf. See the ribs! And here is the fleur dyed design in grass cloth. They tied stones in small sags of its surface, clinching the tie with wraps of grass string, and then dipped the cloth. All was dyed except the varied circles round the necks of the tied stones, where the grass string kept the cloth dry. See the design it makes!

"Here," he would say, "is the talk drum—wireless telegraph of the stone age. It is the trunk of a tree as hard as iron, hollowed laboriously by man's hand wielding a simple knife."

He would pound sonorous notes on it.

"Those two deep notes told everything. They put the drum along the edge of a river and the deep notes traveled as far as ten miles—to be relayed on and on, although if you did not know what they were you would scarcely perceive them.

"You used to go through their country and they knew that you were coming, how many you had with you and when you would arrive. All telegraphed ahead.

"Once, to try them, I stood on the edge of a lake that was two miles across, and said: 'Send word to them to start off a canoe with three men in it.' It happened. Then, when it was 1,000 yards out: 'Tell them to go back and take on four more men.' Which was done instantly. I could see it with my glass.

"The edge of a disappearing world," he would say. "Here is a fan that belonged to the wife of the man who killed Emin. Those were the sandals of Tippo-Tib. Here is the surveyor's tape of the great Livingstone. This was his pocket compass."

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SURELY, it is true, these stately bronze figures, heroic and solemn, breathe the dignity of another epoch.

In his types of the warrior, the firemaker, the idol carver, the witch doctor, the chief, the fugitives, and, above all, that dolorous masterpiece which he named "Distress," he fixed, for the black race, what we of the white race have altogether lost—the vision of the stone age origins. These primitive Africans used metal as stone.

The statues, well above life size, have received all the medals and honors which France could give to a foreigner. With the collection they form a mirror of the primitive life of all men.

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ONE afternoon in 1913 I sat with Herbert Ward.

"I always had a love of art," he said. "In my travels to sketch and model came natural to me."

"You traveled young?" I said.

"I practically ran away from home at the age of fifteen—went to sea as a sailor, got about all over the world and turned up in Africa at twenty-one, after doing all New Zealand, testing hardships in the interior of Australia and penetrating into quite unknown country in North Borneo. From twenty-one I was five years on end in Central Africa. It was the romantic time of the opening of the country, everything being new and unspoiled."

It was through Stanley that he continued on, after having spent nearly three years in the service of the Belgians on the Kongo.

"I was on my way down country when I heard of Stanley's arrival," he said. "I was told that he needed men to carry loads, and as I knew the country and the people, I collected 400 good men and met him on his upward journey, volunteered to join the expedition for the relief of Emin Pasha, and turned back again into the dark continent, there to spend another three years.

"Then, when I came home, I married."

"I had a studio in London," he said, "but I found that the ideas of art there were governed too much by the Royal Academy, and my principal feeling was not connected with the Royal Academy, so I felt hampered.

"Having modeled a head, I gave it, without other motive than friendship, to a friend of mine, Ashton Knight, the American painter, in Paris. Without telling me, he put it in the Salon, where they gave me a mention at once, the first thing I ever had exhibited, and, as a fact, my first formal work in sculpture."

Here, thanks to an illustrious American, son of an illustrious American, the philosophical-artistic purpose of Herbert Ward, an Englishman, was fixed to the world's gain, and ultimately, I think, to the loss of, connection and bronzes by England.

"The thing so encouraged me," said Herbert Ward, "that I came to Paris to live and start this series of primitive types, to preserve them for the world—for all was slipping away in Africa. They had found rubber!"

France appreciated object and execution. His confidence grew, and his artistic genius with it. This, he said, was the great thing with France—they look at the thing which you have done, not prejudiced because it is new, nor at first glance to seek out technical defects, but ask what does this man strive to represent, and does he represent it? France sees the soul of things.

"My object," he said, "is to fix, for all time, something symbolical—not an absolutely realistic thing, like waxworks in an anatomical museum, but combining two great qualities. The bronzes must have the primitive spirit of Africa in its broad sense, and yet fill the requirements of art in sculpture.

"One man is no good," he said. "One man represents nothing. I want that bronze statue to represent, not one chief, but a hundred chiefs. When you pass five years at the impressionable age from twenty-one to twenty-six among an unknown people that interest you deeply such memories are bound to dominate your work. I knew these types.

"I felt that I must fix them!"

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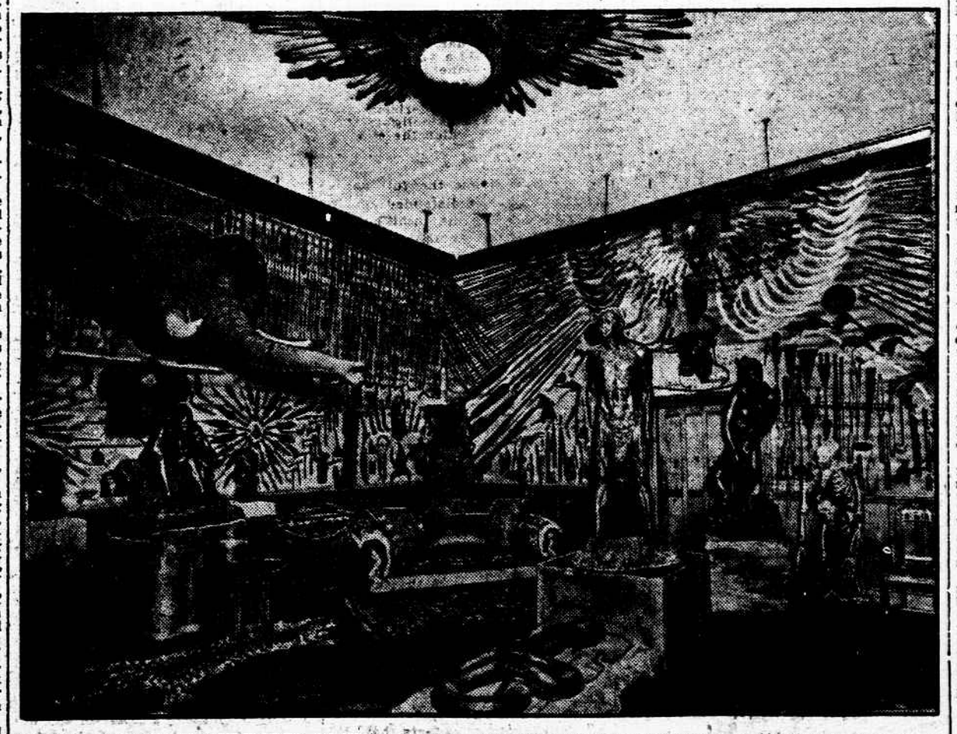
HE stood before "The Warrior."

"Warriors in sculpture, as a rule," he said, "have their arms flung out and are full of movement, but I, who have been present at a deal of fighting, and, alas! a deal of killing, know that the man who is the most intent on killing some one is, in fact, so intent that he keeps himself all knitted together, like a modern boxer. This is not one warrior, but a hundred warriors.

"Sculptors and painters, as a rule," he continued, "go through long training, in which they are influenced by classics, and any original feelings with which they may be born are, regularly, not strong enough to stick, because they see how absolutely perfect all this classic stuff is. So they lose confidence and follow in some rut. They do, over again, better or worse, what has been done.

"Travelers, on the other hand, are chaps who regularly lack one quality—they have no patience. They are on the go. They pass all kinds of interesting things, but go like blazes.

"I stopped and looked," he said, "and that is all there is about it!"



CORNER OF THE MAGNIFICENT MUSEUM WHICH HERBERT WARD ARRANGED BESIDE HIS STUDIO IN PARIS. PHOTO TAKEN JUST BEFORE ROOM WAS DISMANTLED BEFORE BATTLE OF THE MARNE.